



Auburn Environmental Park Project

newsletter

WINTER 2007

Imagine the Possibilities

Message from Mayor Lewis

Thank you for your interest in the Auburn Environmental Park (AEP) Project, a unique opportunity to provide environmental, economic, and social benefits to the region. The AEP Project has already garnered the support of diverse groups like the Auburn Area Chamber of Commerce, Auburn Downtown Association, Rainier Audubon Society, several colleges and universities and the local school district. Please keep reading to learn more about the AEP Project and how you can get involved in this exciting process.

~ Mayor Pete Lewis

Progress to Date

Auburn Staff/TAC continues to work hard and has:

- Completed park feasibility study.
- Completed wetland delineation work.
- Met and received concurrence with the Army Corps of Engineers on the wetland delineation work.
- Completed the Auburn Environmental Park Master Plan (available online).
- Completed one year of extensive surface water quality study within the Auburn Environmental Park drainage basin.
- Awarded a \$100,000 grant towards the replacement of the 15th Street culvert for improved fish passage.
- Awarded a \$30,000 Department of Ecology grant towards restoration work on the Campbell/Litowitz property

Next Steps

During 2007 the City will:

- Continue exploring public-private partnerships, grants and other funding sources.
- Complete land acquisition and begin construction in the summer of 2007.
- Continue groundwater and surface water studies to help refine the master plan and aid in design work.
- Celebrate the grand opening of the Auburn Environmental Park in the spring once the trailhead is completed along Western Avenue (more details forthcoming).

In This Issue

Progress to Date/Next Steps for AEP

Major Planting Event

The Great Blue Heron

Northwest Native Plants

For more information on the Auburn Environmental Park Project, please visit our web site at:

www.auburnwa.gov

OR

Contact the Planning, Building & Community Department at:

253-931-3090

Imagine the Possibilities

Auburn Environmental Park Project

Project Background

The Auburn Environmental Park (AEP) Project seeks to create open space within an urbanized area, which will provide many mutual benefits.

The park will provide opportunities for local economic development, water quality improvement, stormwater detention, flood control, fish and wildlife enhancement, public education, and recreation, including hiking trails and bird viewing amenities.

City of Auburn

25 W Main Street
Auburn WA 98001
253-931-3000
www.auburnwa.gov

Mayor Peter B. Lewis

253-931-3041
plewis@auburnwa.gov

Auburn City Council

Nancy Backus
Gene Cerino
Lynn Norman
Bill Peloza
Sue Singer
Roger Thordarson
Rich Wagner

Map (right):

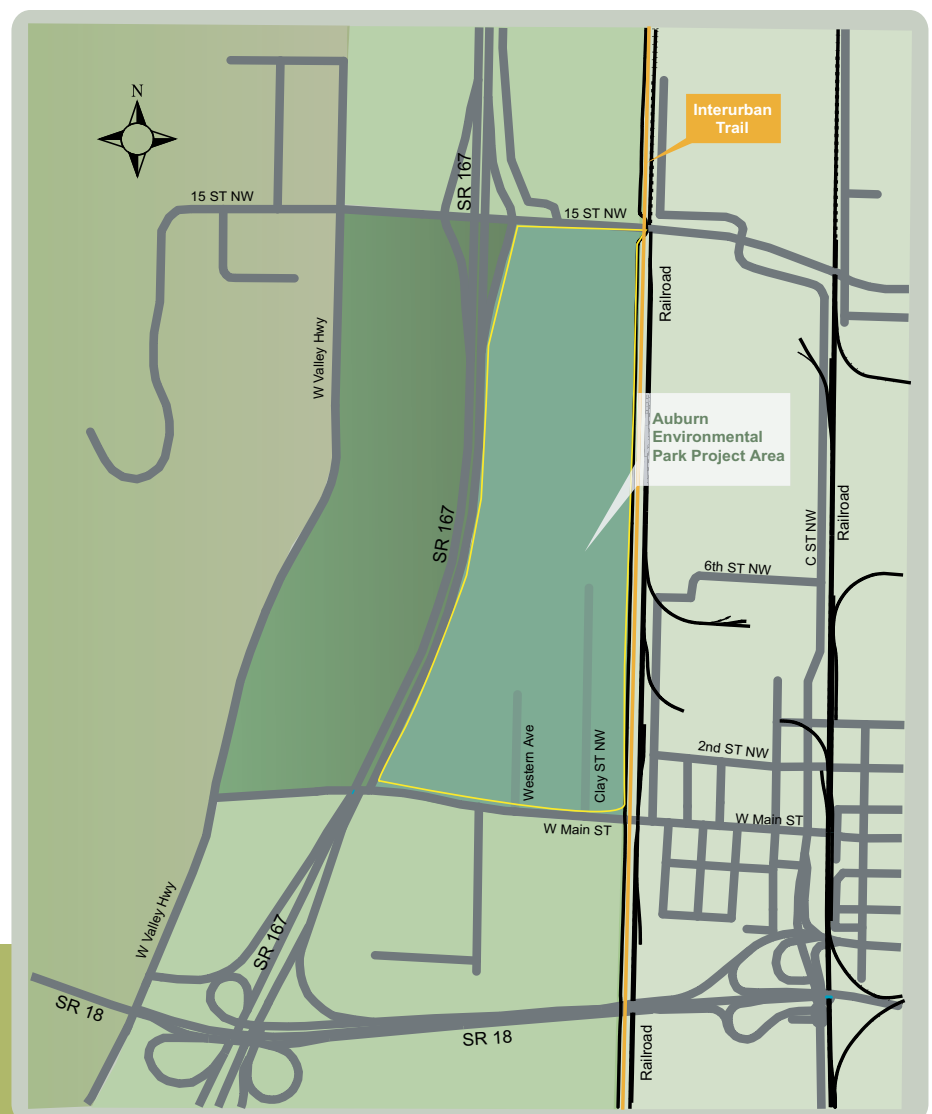
AEP Project location. The vicinity west of SR 167 encompasses a segment of Mill Creek that could be included in the next AEP Project phase.



How Do I Get Involved?

Are you passionate about this community? Do you have a great idea not reflected above? If so, please get involved and let your ideas be known. To get involved in this exciting project, you can:

- *Invite a project team member to speak to your neighborhood or organization*
- *Sign up for the project mailing list to receive periodic updates and invitations to public events (email your request to AEP@auburnwa.gov)*
- *Continue checking our website at www.auburnwa.gov for updates*



Auburn Environmental Park Project

Imagine the Possibilities

Major Planting Event at Auburn Environmental Park

Aaron Nix, Environmental Project Manager, and Cindy Plass, Natural Resources Intern with the City of Auburn, began planting on Oct. 25 at the future trail head of the Auburn Environmental Park. The plants arrived in mid-October and were waiting patiently to be put in the ground due to the drier than normal month of October.

As part of a \$30,000 ecology grant, the City of Auburn with the help of the Auburn High School Key Club continued the restoration of a one-acre property at the end of Western Avenue on Nov. 1. Through the grant, approximately \$4,000 was spent on the plants, and the volunteer efforts of the AHS Key Club, along with City staff, helped to complete the planting on this site.

On Nov. 12, about 60 more volunteers put on their boots and rain gear and braved the November weather to help with the planting. These volunteers from Calvary Community Church in Sumner cancelled their Sunday church services to go out into the community and get actively involved where they were needed. They did a tremendous job. The masses were able to put every remaining plant in the ground within a couple of hours. They planted Salmonberry, Pacific Ninebark, Nootka Rose and Willows, among others.

The total number of northwest native plants that have been installed at this site is 710, including 200 live stake Willow cuttings. Thank you very much to all of our wonderful volunteers!



The Great Blue Heron

The Great Blue Heron is the largest Heron in North America. This adaptable bird enjoys the mild climate of the Pacific Northwest and makes its home in a variety of different habitats in our region. The Heron likes to forage in slow moving fresh, salt or brackish water for fish, amphibians, small mammals and a few other small creatures.

The Blue Heron is a migratory bird, but most will stay here in Washington year round. Some may migrate here from places further north. "Although Great Blue Herons are common and widespread, disturbance during a breeding season may lead to nest failure or colony abandonment. In April of 1999, 40% of the Seattle-area heron colonies were abandoned mid-season," according the birdweb.org website.



Disturbances such as deforestation and degradation of wetlands result in a loss of habitat. This always has a snowball affect. For instance, loss of habitat means less food available for not only the Blue Heron but also predators of Blue Heron young. These include Bald Eagles and Crows which will raid a Heron's nest when the opportunity presents itself.

There are two great Blue Heron nesting sites in the city of Auburn and a large area to the north of us called the Kent Ponds where many Heron can be seen. These areas are not far from the future Auburn Environmental Park (AEP) where there have been sightings. The open wetland area of the AEP is perfect habitat for the Great Blue Heron. The AEP provides a large area with open water habitat for foraging and trees for nesting. The restoration and wetland enhancement will improve wetland health and wildlife habitat. The fact that the AEP will be free from human disturbance and is directly in the Pacific Flyway will make it a great attraction for many more Great Blue Heron.

Auburn Environmental Park Project

Northwest Native Plants in Auburn Environmental Park

Planting native trees and shrubs is a great step towards restoring the natural open space areas of Auburn. Many northwest native plant species have been planted at the new Auburn Environmental Park. Planting native species is a key factor in habitat restoration. These plants contribute greatly to the function of wetlands by creating habitat, improving water quality and controlling erosion and flooding.

Some flowering shrubs were planted to create a diverse understory, aesthetic value as well as habitat. They are also a great attraction for butterflies and humming birds. These plants include:

- Mock Orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*)
- Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*)
- Nootka Rose (*Rosa nutkana*)
- Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*)
- Twinberry (*Lonicera involucrata*)
- Pacific Ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*)



Sitka Willow (*Salix sitchensis*) and Pacific Willow (*Salix lucida*) live stakes cuttings were planted at the AEP. Both of these northwest natives are easy to grow in our climate. They love very wet soil and can tolerate flooding for much of the growing season. The cuttings are taken directly from an existing tree. The leaves are removed and the cuttings are put in the ground (right side up). Generally the cutting is about 3 feet long. It is put into the ground



about half way and it will grow! Live stake Willow cuttings are widely used in habitat restoration because of their high success and fast growth rate. In their application within our restoration site in Auburn Environmental Park, these Willow cuttings will help shield our new plantings from further Reed Canary Grass infestation by shading it out and providing a barrier from further intrusion.

Some native trees were planted in an effort to create a tree canopy which would simulate one that would have naturally occurred before deforestation. Included in these magnificent northwest tree species was the Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*).

Northwest Native Americans used the Western Red Cedar (WRC) for everything from clothing to canoes to medicine. It was said to contain tremendous power and strength. One could receive its strength by standing under it. (Pojar, J., & MacKinnon, A. (1994). *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast*. Lone Pine Publishing)

The largest WRC still known to exist is located here in Washington State near the shores of Quinalt Lake, north of Aberdeen. It is 53 meters (174 feet) tall with a trunk diameter of almost 6 meters (20 feet). Other trees planted were:

- Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*)
- Douglass Fir (*Abies procera*)
- Oregon Ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*)
- Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*)



Imagine the Possibilities